Two and a Half Cannibals

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Two and a Half Cannibals

by 305unreal

Summary

Serial killer Will Graham's life is turned upside down when his old friend Hannibal and ten-year-old daughter Abigail move in with him when Hannibal's wife Alana kicks him out. Meanwhile, Will's accomplice, Matthew, is stalking him.

Unseasoned meat tenderizer mixed with natural spring water fills the smaller of two basins in the washroom located behind the false backing wall of the large barn within the Graham estate. *Estate* would be pushing boundaries, but the family owns the two-story farmhouse and half a mile surrounding it in all directions. In the much larger and modified basin nearby is a boiling mixture of sodium hydroxide. Will emerges from a wall of rubberized plastics, equipped in full-body insulted scrubs and heat-resistant gloves. It's a personalized outfit he's perfected over the years.

He gingerly prods at one of the leg bones floating in the concentrated lye. While the combination has become a texture akin to a slurry, the color hasn't shifted to a brownish tone, so the bones aren't yet brittle. An oak barrel half-filled with slightly soapy water lies in wait, warmed by constant pressure. Each bone is carefully extradited from basin to barrel. Those that crack or shatter are imperfect and are instead tossed onto a blue fishing tarp that's draped over a drain. Will recovers a bright purple lingerie set from the initial basin, now void of any blood, struggle, or DNA.

"Oh, Laura…" he sighs, tsking to himself. "If only life had taken you down another path."

"But instead, she found her way inside a bucket."

Will isn't fazed by the second voice. Matthew Brown is his stalker, and it's his incredible devotion that keeps him from being killed alongside the Fairfax Fisherman's victims.

"You had a call on your landline."

That garners a raised eyebrow. Not many people call him, and those that do use his mobile.

"I take it you didn't answer."

Matthew rocks on the heels of his feet, careful to stay in the side doorway that leads to the butchery. He waits until Will finishes replacing the bones in the barrel. Once he secures a lid on the top, he catches Matthew's eyes.

“Left a message. Said his name’s Hannibal, and he sounded really bad off. His wife threw him out, and he said he wanted to touch base, but his voice sounded a bit suicidal. Wanna call back or…?”

He trails off, glancing at the basins behind Will. The curly-haired man lets out a slow exhale but nods.

“Suit up properly. Fold the tarp away. Wait forty minutes and drain the barrel. Lay the bones on a new tarp in the butchery, and text me when it’s done.”

Will has four mobiles – associates, FBI, Academy, and personal – along with a stash of burners. He’s only got two on his person at the moment, and Matthew only has the number for one. They aren’t friends, but Will has seen his work; he knows he can deal with smaller issues, knowing it’s his head if he screws up. Matthew nods and heads to the closet for another outfit set while Will removes his outfit to reveal a plaid shirt and jeans beneath. In the main house, Will sharply whistles at his dogs to calm down, and he hits redial on the phone line.

“Hey, Hannibal. Been a while.”

“Oh, Will, you *are* home. I hate to ask, but my accounts are currently tied with Alana’s, and I’m afraid I haven’t learned to trust many people since we’ve last seen one another.”

“You’re asking to stay here.”

“Not for too long, mind you,” he assures the younger man. “Would you mind terribly?”

“I have a spare bedroom and a couch.”

“Thank you, Will.”

Just as he hangs up the phone, Will hears the unmistakable sound of a Bentley traveling down his driveway. He rolls his eyes and looks things over. Everything looks fine aside from the specks of blood on his boots. He trades them for a pair of well-worn trainers in the hall closet, tying the laces as he hears a knock on the door.

"Hannibal," he nods in greeting before opening the door further. "Welcome to your temporary residence."

The older man quirks an eyebrow at the terminology, but a small grin plays on the corner of his lips. He brings his luggage – a rolling suitcase and a designer bag – into the house, and Will leads him into the kitchen.

"Coffee or tea?"

"Chamomile would be most preferred if you have it."

"As a matter of fact."

Chamomile helps him when he has nightmares, and green tea helps to quell nausea. They're the only types of tea he keeps in the house, so he quickly sets the kettle on the stovetop. When he looks over at Hannibal, the European man looks wrecked. He hums at him, leaning against the counter.

"I take vows very seriously, you understand," he starts the conversation. "It's only recently come to my attention that she does not. I've been a good husband. I'm faithful."

"Is she?"

"Is she what?"

“Faithful.”

“I’ve never thought anything different. Until last week, when she decided I was suffocating her,” he shakes his head. “This could just destroy Abigail.”

Will nods absently. He remembers Hannibal’s daughter, though they’ve rarely interacted.

“She’s… eleven?”

“Ten,” Hannibal corrects him. “She’ll be eleven later in the year.”

Will hums again, mentally wondering what he’s gotten himself into and how long he’ll have a guest living here.

“C’mon, I’ll show you to the guest room. I’ll grab some sheets.”

“Oh, that’s quite alright. I brought my own.”

Will refrains from rolling his eyes but, as he turns around, the kettle whistles.

“Up the stairs, second door on the right.”

“Thank you, Will.”

Hannibal easily finds the guest room and begins arranging his sheets while Will makes tea. He purposely only makes one cup and joins him upstairs. His guest is in the process of unloading his clothes into the empty wardrobe, but a tired smile forms when he sees his host.

“Okay, then, good night.”

“Oh? Wouldn’t you like to stay awhile? We hardly talk to each other.”

“What do you want to talk about, Hannibal?” He asks, leaning against the doorway and crossing his arms.

Caught somewhat off guard by the sudden hostility, Hannibal scrambles through his mind to think of something to say.

“I received a psychoanalysis award from the Baltimore Psychological Association.”

Will nods, “Good chat. Good night.”

Hannibal opens his mouth to say something else, but Will is gone again. He sighs to himself and returns to setting up his temporary space. Rather than take the stairs, Will opens the bay window hidden behind a forged painting and takes the trellis to the barn. Matthew messaged him while he made the tea, and Will added a decent dose of liquid Eszopiclone to keep Hannibal asleep tonight. In the barn, Will redresses in scrubs, grabbing a third pair of boots and gloves. He collects a readymade spray bottle – with a 1:10 ratio mix of peroxide to water – from a shelf in the butchery, and he lightly mists the bones.

The men work in silent tandem, placing the bones onto a cooler that’s lined in padded cloth. Will grabs an old tackle box, and Matthew hands over a set of keys for the most recent stolen vehicle hiding in the woods. While Matthew cleans the backroom, Will takes the minivan, and drives to the local playground, knowing where to avoid any cameras in the city. He painstakingly reconstructs the body, slipping the lingerie along her moderately brittle bones, and tying the skeleton together with fishing line. He uses hooks to affix her pelvis to a swing, and her fingers curled around the chains. The back of the left hand is connected to the side of her skull, and Will steps back to look at his latest work of art.

Matthew has cleared out once Will returns home, the minivan left behind at a creek with all of the doors, trunk, and hood left open. This is to ensure any possible prints will be removed. The smaller basin has been refilled with soap and cold water for the scrubs outfit, and

Matthew's is already washing inside. Will adds his and returns inside the main house in his socks. His bedroom is downstairs, located directly below the guest room and behind the stairs so he can hear anything hinky.

He's unceremoniously woken up hours later when he hears a chain of low growling, courtesy of his dogs' mistrust. There's a knocking at the door, and the growling intensifies. Will grabs a bowie knife from his nightstand and silently pads down the hall. He shushes the pack, clicking his tongue for his German Shepherd, Dragen, to join him. The pack quiets in an instant, lowering themselves to the floor, and Dragen moves to his side, baring his teeth. Will glances toward the staircase but hears no movement. Another knock sounds at the door, and all of the dogs perk up, but the dog at his hip is the only one to move. He walks with Will, and the young man glances through the curtains… and relaxes his shoulders.

"Terug naar beneden," Will orders the pack to stand down, and the tension falls away.

The German Shepherd looks up at his master, tongue sticking out, and Will laughs mutely.

"Good boy."

He places the weapon on the mantle above the fireplace and answers the door before his newest guest can start her third round of knocking.

"Good morning, Abigail."

"Hi, Uncle Will," she smiles hesitantly. "My mom dropped me off. Is Papa here?"

"He's sleeping upstairs. Go wake him up, and I'll fix breakfast."

She nods but stops in her tracks when she sees the slew of dogs. Her eyes widen, and the biggest smile crosses her lips.

“They’ll be here when you come back down.”

“Right.”

She drops her backpack and runs upstairs. Will knows he didn’t tell her which door, but everything is locked aside from the guest room, the closet, and the washroom. Will drops her backpack on the sofa and moves into the kitchen. He’s got plenty of meats that can be made into bacon and sausage to go along with eggs. Nobody asks where the meat came from, but if they do, he can always claim a hunt. It isn’t technically a lie.

By the time Hannibal walks downstairs, he’s dressed for the day. Abigail is on the floor, playing with the dogs, and Will sets the table. The older man eyes him warily, but he graces him with a small smile.

“Thank you for breakfast, Will. Had I not overslept, I would have made you something.”

“Guess you’re glad you brought your own sheets.”

He nods and accepts a plate. Will keeps an eye on him and Abigail as they start eating, and he’s amused by their delighted reactions.

“You cook like Papa!” Abigail expresses around a mouthful of bacon.

“Indeed, Will. Where did you ever find such a selection?"

“Fresh kill,” he easily answers, spearing a piece of sausage. “I hunt and fish every week.”

“Papa hunts sometimes.”

“Perhaps we could go together one day,” Hannibal practically purrs.

“I prefer nights.”

The meal is completed quietly, and Will lets Abigail take the dogs outside for play. He makes another kettle of tea, this time making two cups. In his peripheral vision, he notes that Hannibal waits for him to take the first sip, and he represses a grin.

“Do you think you’ll get back together, or do you see divorce papers in your future?”

“We made a list of what she liked and didn’t like about our marriage.” When Will nods, Hannibal adds, “The first thing she added? Sometimes when she thinks about coming home to me, she starts crying in the car.”

“Lanie’s a fucking bitch.”

Not expecting the vulgar talk, Hannibal chokes on his tea.

“*Alana* went on to complain about how I am rigid, inflexible, obsessive, and anal-retentive. Divorce papers will certainly cross paths with one of us very soon.”

As though she can hear the conversation, Hannibal’s mobile rings. He offers an apologetic smile when he answers, and Will walks outside. He finds Abigail sitting on the bottom step, scratching Buster’s belly.

“Tired?”

“Mom and Papa are splitting up.”

“Yeah, looks that way. You’re lucky. When I was your age, I could only dream about my parents splitting up.”

“Mom says I’m staying here for the weekend so she and Aunt Margot can go to Vegas.”

Will hums, and they fall into silence, watching the dogs.

Eventually, Will and Hannibal need to leave for their respective jobs. Since Will doesn’t necessarily trust Abigail alone at his house, Hannibal agrees to take her to his office today. Will leaves first, needing to run an errand before making it to his first class, and Matthew shows up as Hannibal is locking up with the spare key. He’s carrying a taped-up package in one hand.

“You’re not Will,” he states suspiciously, empty hand sliding toward the switchblade in his back pocket.

“I am not,” Hannibal agrees. “Can I help you?”

“I’m here for Will.”

“I’m afraid you’re out of luck.”

“Who the hell are you, and why’ve you got his keys?”

Abigail nudges her papa; a silent request to *play nice with Will’s neighbors*, and Hannibal releases his frustration in a slow exhale.

“Forgive my manners. My name is Hannibal, and this is Abigail. We are Will’s friends, and we are staying here *with Will* for a short period.”

The younger man wavers and his hand twitches, so Abigail speaks up.

“Mom and Papa are splitting up.”

And then he nods in understanding. “Ah, okay. Been there. I’m Matthew.”

“Nice to meet you, Matthew,” Abigail takes initiative and holds out her hand.

He grins, a bit twisted, but enthusiastically shakes her hand. “*Very* nice to meet you, Abigail.” He spares a glance up and down to the other person on the front porch as he sets the package on the welcome mat. “Hannibal.”

“Matthew,” he regards him guardedly.

After a long day with Quantico’s finest up-and-coming agents, Will’s surprised but certainly thankful he doesn’t receive any phone calls from Crawford. Not one to look a gift horse in the mouth, he drives home, only to find a random brown box sitting in front of his door. Not seeing the Bentley anywhere in sight, he takes out his personal mobile and sends a text.

T: HL

Did you have a package delivered to the house? – WG

T: William

Indeed not, Will. Your neighbor Matthew brought it over. – HL

Will’s blood runs cold, and he whips out his pocketknife. He carves off the lid instead of just snipping along the taped edges. Wrapped in aluminum foil inside is a familiar left hand. Its digits aside from the thumb have been removed rather inelegantly with a set of pliers, and the thumb's nail is painted a pale blue but scratched and bitten to the nub. Will glances around his property and then lets out a loud, angry, anguished scream. Matthew *needs* to *go*. Elizabeth

Shell was a beloved nurse in town. She treated his encephalitis when he first moved to Virginia, and Matthew *knows* this.

He's hidden her hand in the barn's hidden freezer and has started cooking stew by the time Hannibal and Abigail return. Will tells them that he's only just begun dinner and asks Abigail to take the dogs out. She eagerly does so and, when it's only the two of them, Hannibal turns to Will.

"Has something happened?"

"Did you let Matthew into my house?" He counters the question with another, barely repressed rage thundering in his chest.

"Certainly not. He walked over as I was locking up."

Will nods, some relief draining from his shoulders.

"Did he touch Abigail?"

Hannibal frowns. "Only to shake her hand. Is this neighbor of yours dangerous?"

"He's not my neighbor," Will growls. "He's a deeply disturbed man."

Hannibal's eyes harden. "Should I be calling the police?"

"No. I'll handle it."

Will makes green tea to drink with dinner, and Abigail thanks him. Hannibal apparently makes a similar-tasting tea; when Will glances over, it doesn't look like Hannibal has drunk

much of his tea. Will easily drinks his, though he's already ingested modafinil to keep him awake despite the seeped sedative.

After dark, Will slips out, ostensibly unaware of the eyes watching him in the dark. Clothed in his scrubs outfit, Will shrugs on a long black overcoat. He snatches a pair of sunglasses and struts to the driver's side of the Bentley, his eyes effortlessly finding Hannibal's in the shadows.

"Are you coming with?"

"Of course, you knew I was following."

"You didn't drink your tea."

"It didn't harm me last night," he retorts. "I doubt you would attempt anything harmful tonight."

Will nods his head to the side.

"I like your outfit," Hannibal adds after a long lull.

Will scoffs, "I call them murder scrubs."

He lets out a startled yet genuine bark of laughter, and the tension dissolves as the two men laugh. Will allows Hannibal to turn on the classical music station on the radio as they make the drive from Wolf Trapp to Fort Meade.

Matthew doesn't get the chance to be startled. Will finds his key in the false rock in the garden with no help, and he remotely disables the alarm with a code on his mobile. Matthew is chloroformed in his bed and thrown over Hannibal's back with no effort. His wrists and ankles are tied in fishing line, and he's tossed in the trunk. The previous tension doesn't quite

come back, but rage trembles through Will's body. Before Hannibal can help it, he leans across the centre console and inhales deeply. Will immediately slams on the brakes, and Hannibal just barely grabs hold of the dashboard before his head lurches in the distance.

"You just fucking *smelled* me."

It isn't a question, but Hannibal nods slowly, somewhat afraid to anger the anxious driver. Will stresses his hands around the steering wheel before removing one. He places the car in park and fully turns to face his companion. Hannibal unflinchingly looks him in the eye, swallowing heavily as Will reaches out to grasp his chin. His sharp nails graze his cheek and lower to his throat. He just barely applies pressure, not enough to cut off breath or blood flow, and his other hand slackens when Hannibal's eyes dilate.

"There you are, Ripper," he whispers, a menacing grin creeping up. "Tell me. Have you found *me* yet?"

Hannibal racks his brain, thoughts hindered as Will kneads his throat with nails. He breaks the skin, blood finding a new home beneath his nails, and Hannibal's breath catches.

"The Fairfax Fisherman."

Will smiles, and this one almost reaches his eyes. He withdraws his hand, and Hannibal feels bereft of the pain. He shifts the vehicle into drive and starts back down the road.

"Does Abigail know?"

"To an extent."

"Are you a cannibal?"

Hannibal only grins, but Will catches it and smiles back. The ride back to Wolf Trapp is much lighter, and Will offers his criminal companion a spare set of murder scrubs when they arrive at the barn. Hannibal surgically carves Matthew's organs from his body while he's tied down and being pumped with adrenaline. The killers keep Matthew's heart and brain attached while they strip him of everything. With Hannibal's expertise, they're able to remove and dissolve, prod and soak, rinse and mist.

Day breaks, and Will offers Hannibal a solution of Modafinil to keep him focused for the day to come.

"Good morning, Papa," Abigail greets Hannibal when she walks down the stairs.

He's fully dressed, which isn't out of the norm. When she sees that Will is also dressed, though, she frowns.

"Morning, Uncle Will. Am I supposed to be dressed, too?"

He glances between their different apparel and smiles softly. "No, you're fine, Abigail. I made a food run for the dogs."

She accepts his answer and asks if she can play with the pack while the adults make breakfast, and Will whistles for the dogs to gather at the back door. While the preteen leads them outside, Will and Hannibal trade knowing looks and start cooking bacon.

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